

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20015 656-4068

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM CBS Reports STATION WDVM TV
CBS Network

DATE January 23, 1982 9:30 PM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception

MIKE WALLACE: The only war America has ever lost, the war in Vietnam, reached a dramatic turning point 14 years ago this month. The morning of January 30th, 1968, across the length and breadth of South Vietnam, the enemy we thought was losing the war suddenly launched a massive surprise attack. It was called the Tet offensive. And the size of the assault, the casualties, the devastation caught the American public totally by surprise. But more than that, it caught the mighty American Army, half a million strong, unprepared for the enemy's bold strikes in all of South Vietnam's cities.

As the fighting continued, it became clear that the ragged enemy forces we thought were being ground down had greater numbers and greater military strength than we had been led to believe. Before they were finally pushed back, those Viet Cong forces had left behind a nagging question in the minds of millions of Americans: How was it possible for them to surface so brazenly and so successfully at a time when Americans at home were being told the enemy was running out of men?

The fact is that we Americans were misinformed about the nature and the size of the enemy we were facing. And tonight we're going to present evidence of what we have come to believe was a conscious effort, indeed a conspiracy, at the highest levels of American military intelligence to suppress and alter critical intelligence on the enemy in the year leading up to the Tet offensive.

A former CIA analyst, Sam Adams, introduced us to this evidence and he became our consultant. What you're about to see are the results of our efforts over the last 12 months to confirm his findings, and then what my CBS colleague George Crile and I

OFFICES IN: WASHINGTON D.C. • NEW YORK • LOS ANGELES • CHICAGO • DETROIT • AND OTHER PRINCIPAL CITIES

Material supplied by Radio TV Reports, Inc. may be used for file and reference purposes only. It may not be reproduced, sold or publicly demonstrated or exhibited.

discovered when we took the investigation the next step.

What went wrong in Vietnam is still one of the great questions of our recent American experience. We still don't know all the answers. But tonight we shall offer an explanation for one of the great mysteries of the war: why for so long our government apparently believed, and wanted all of us to believe, that we were winning the war.

*

*

*

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON: We are strong. No nation has ever been stronger. Our troops have courage. None ever have been braver or better trained. Our spirit is sharp. Our cause is just, and it is backed by strength. Our cause will succeed.

WALLACE: But despite all the assurances, we lost the war in Vietnam. The cost: \$150 billion, 12 agonizing years, 57,000 American soldiers dead; and the question that still haunts us: How could we have lost the war when for so long we were told we were slowly but inevitably winning?

Vietnam was Lyndon Johnson's war. But from the beginning of the American buildup, the President placed his faith in victory on one man, General William Westmoreland. Westmoreland was there commanding the 25,000 American advisers in 1964, urging the President to commit combat troops in 1965. And by 1966, he was Time magazine's Man of the Year, America's first real military hero since Eisenhower.

Cam Ranh Bay, October 1966, a moment of triumph for General Westmoreland and for his commander-in-chief. The previous year, Westmoreland had told the President we would lose if American combat troops weren't committed to the battle. The President responded by sending 300,000 more American soldiers. And now Lyndon Johnson was so encouraged by Westmoreland's reports that he concluded a Communist victory in Vietnam was, quote, impossible.

Vietnam was a war in which statistics ruled supreme. And the main reason for the growing optimism in the fall of 1966 was the overwhelming logic of General Westmoreland's statistics.

There were always accusations that the body count was exaggerated. But there was no denying the fact that once the American Army intervened, we started to capture or kill enormous numbers of the enemy. And since Westmoreland put the total number of Viet Cong at 285,000, it seemed inevitable that we would simply grind the enemy down.

That became the government's position in the summer and

fall of 1966. And it was just at this point that a lone analyst at the CIA found reason to question the very basis of General Westmoreland's assertion that we could defeat the enemy. His name was Sam Adams.

As you began to study U.S. military intelligence on the ground in Saigon, on the ground in Vietnam, what did you learn about its quality?

SAM ADAMS: I couldn't really tell, except something was terribly wrong.

WALLACE: What was wrong?

ADAMS: Well, you had all the casualties, maybe 150,000. You had all the deserters that I was finding, 100,000 Viet Cong taking over -- going over the hill, taking off. And this was all happening, this quarter of a million guys leaving or getting killed yearly out of an outfit that was supposed to be 280,000 strong. I had to ask myself: Who the hell are we fighting out there?

WALLACE: Adams found the answer to his questions when a top secret packet was delivered to his office at CIA.

ADAMS: And what it was was a captured enemy document, a translation of one, which arrived on my desk. And it said the number of enemy guerrillas and militiamen in Binh Dinh province was 50,000. And I looked at the official order of battle and I looked up Binh Dinh to compare it to the documents, and I saw the number carried in the official order of battle -- that is, our official estimate of enemy strength -- was 4500, one-twelfth or one-eleventh, whatever it is, of the number in the document. And there I saw it clearly. We had been underestimating the number of enemy, probably not only in Binh Dinh, one of 44 provinces, but perhaps through the whole country.

WALLACE: In time, Adams' discovery would precipitate the longest, bitterest battle in the history of American intelligence. But it would be several months before he could persuade the CIA to confront the military with his evidence of a far larger enemy.

In the meantime, the President's optimism was growing.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: What we do know is General Westmoreland's strategy is producing results, that our military situation has substantially improved.

WALLACE: But despite Lyndon Johnson's assurances, millions of Americans had become disenchanted with the war. And by the spring of 1967, with half a million American troops already

committed, it was clear that Congress and the American public would not tolerate any further escalation.

The angry street demonstrations were worrisome. But far more menacing to the White House were the growing numbers of hawks, as well as doves, who were beginning to question the President's claim that we could win.

It was at this moment, in April 1967, that Lyndon Johnson took an unprecedented step. He called his field commander home from the battle front to reassure the American public that the President's policy was sound, that we were in fact winning the war.

GENERAL WILLIAM WESTMORELAND: I was ordered to come to Washington.

WALLACE: I remember there was a great to-do about your coming back from Vietnam.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I wasn't happy about it, but I was ordered back. And I said, "If this is the President -- if this is what the President wants me to do, well, I'll do my best."

WALLACE: Was President Johnson a difficult man to feed bad news about the war?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, Mike, you know as well as I do that people in senior positions love good news. Politicians or leaders in countries are inclined to shoot the messenger that brings the bad news. Certainly, he wanted bad news like a hole in the head.

WALLACE: But on this day, Westmoreland had mostly good news to offer his commander-in-chief. The Viet Cong's army, he said, had leveled off at 285,000 men. And best of all, he told the President, the long-awaited crossover point had been reached. We were now killing or capturing Viet Cong at a rate faster than they could be put back in the field. We were winning the war of attrition.

MAN: Mr. Speaker, Mr. William C. Westmoreland.

[Applause]

WALLACE: Never before had a field commander addressed the Congress in a time of war. It should have been a moment of uncomplicated triumph. But put yourself in General Westmoreland's shoes in the troubled spring of 1967. He had just used very specific figures to assure the President that the enemy was losing strength, that we were winning the war of attrition. And now the President was forcing Westmoreland to put that message on the

on the record for the American public, to assure them that General Westmoreland believed we were on the road to victory.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Backed at home by resolve, confidence, patience, determination and continued support, we will prevail in Vietnam over the Communist aggressor.

WALLACE: What Westmoreland apparently didn't know when he came here to Washington was that his intelligence chief back in Vietnam had just discovered evidence that confirmed the CIA's estimates of a far larger enemy.

What had happened was that Westmoreland's army had just completed the largest offensives of the war, Operation Junction City and Cedar Falls. A major Viet Cong stronghold had been overrun. And afterward, one of the enemy's central headquarters had been found deep underground. American GIs had crawled down hundreds of feet into an elaborate network of tunnels and underground rooms and had come up with hundreds of thousands of pages of captured enemy documents detailing the Viet Cong's organizational structure and manpower records.

With these documents in hand, General Westmoreland's intelligence chief had gone to work to check out the CIA's assertion of a far larger enemy.

When we began our interview with General Westmoreland, he attempted to dismiss the CIA's reporting on the enemy as unreliable.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: There was a few individuals, as I recall, a young man named Adams, who was an analyst, who had...

WALLACE: Sam Adams.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Is that -- I don't know his name. But anyway, his school of thought was that we were underestimating the strength of the enemy.

Now, in the meanwhile, we were on the ground. We dealt with every village, every hamlet, every province as a separate item. We didn't use extrapolation in order to come up with the figures.

WALLACE: And your intelligence chief there on the ground in Vietnam, General Joseph McChristian, was the fellow who had developed a lot of this?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: General Joseph McChristian was a superb intelligence officer.

WALLACE: Westmoreland's intelligence chief, General

Joseph McChristian, began his career estimating enemy capabilities as General George Patton's intelligence chief during World War II. A West Point graduate, he was the military's Chief of Intelligence for two years, 1966 and 1967, in Vietnam.

So when it came to reporting on the enemy, you didn't especially count on the CIA's work on this score, you stood by the work of General McChristian and his staff.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, sure. The CIA was very remote. We were on the scene.

WALLACE: What Westmoreland failed to tell us in our interview was that here at the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam -- MACV, as it was called -- his intelligence chiefs had come to agree with the CIA's growing conviction that we were fighting a far larger enemy. They had been studying the captured enemy documents. And when Westmoreland returned to MACV headquarters, General McChristian and the military's leading expert on the Viet Cong, Colonel Gaines Hawkins, presented him with the bad news. Hawkins began the briefing.

COLONEL GAINES HAWKINS: The figures that I briefed on that particular occasion were the new strength figures on the political order of battle, as we called it -- this is the Viet Cong's political bureaucracy -- and the raw strength.

WALLACE: Colonel Hawkins told us MACV intelligence had determined that there were a lot more VC out there than had previously been recognized. In fact, he says that these major intelligence reports pointed to a dramatic increase in enemy strength estimates; in fact, something on the order of 200,000 more VC. Do you remember that?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I remember such a report. Yes.

HAWKINS: I don't want to read anybody's mind, George. But there was a great deal of concern about the impact that this new figure would have. And General Westmoreland appeared to be very much surprised at the magnitude of the figures.

WALLACE: According to Colonel Hawkins, he said that the General seemed to be taken by surprise. He remembers your first words after listening to that briefing were, "What am I going to tell the press? What am I going to tell the Congress? What am I going to tell the President?" True?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I do recall a session with Hawkins. Yes. But I was very, very suspicious of this particular estimate. And the reason was that you come to a shade of gray. You get down at the hamlet level and you've got teen-agers and you've got old men who can be armed and can be useful to the

enemy, and who are technically Viet Cong.

WALLACE: Right.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: But they don't have any military capability of consequence.

COLONEL HAWKINS: There was no mistaking the message.

GEORGE CRILE: Which was?

COLONEL HAWKINS: That there was great concern about the impact of these figures, that their being higher.

CRILE: They didn't want higher numbers.

COLONEL HAWKINS: That was the message.

WALLACE: This is the way General McChristian remembers Westmoreland's reaction to the briefing.

GENERAL JOSEPH MCCHRISTIAN: And when General Westmoreland saw the large increase in figures that we had developed, he was quite disturbed by it. And by the time I left his office, I had the definite impression that he felt if he sent those figures back to Washington at that time, it would create a political bombshell.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I was not about to send to Washington something that was specious. And in my opinion, it was specious.

WALLACE: But General Joseph McChristian, a man whom you call a superb intelligence chief, he's the fellow who comes in and says, "General, we've been wrong. There are twice as many people out there."

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, I have great admiration for General McChristian, and he did a good job. But in this case, I disagreed with him, with him, and other members of my staff disagreed with him.

WALLACE: Consider Westmoreland's dilemma. If he accepted his intelligence chief's findings, he would have to take the bad news to the President. If he didn't, well, there was only General McChristian to deal with.

GENERAL MCCHRISTIAN: Evidently, people didn't like my reporting, because I was constantly showing that the enemy strength was increasing. I was constantly reporting that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong had the capability and the will to continue a protracted war of attrition at the same level of operations

as were currently going on for an indefinite period. And I personally wrote that paragraph in every estimate I sent in and insisted that that be known. Maybe there was objections to that.

CRILE: Sir, that was running strongly against the grain of popular wisdom at that time.

GENERAL MCCHRISTIAN: But not against fact.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I did not accept his recommendation. I did not accept it. And I didn't accept it because of political reasons. That was -- I may have mentioned this. I guess I did. But that was not the fundamental thing. I just didn't accept it.

WALLACE: What's the political reason? Why would it have been a political bombshell? That's really...

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Because the people in Washington were not sophisticated enough to understand and evaluate this thing, and neither was the media.

WALLACE: We underscore what General Westmoreland just said about his decision. He chose not to inform the Congress, the President, not even the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the evidence collected by his intelligence chief, evidence which indicated a far larger enemy.

CRILE: In a time of war, when you're talking about enemy strength estimates, what are you thinking, General McChristian, when you confront your responsibility?

GENERAL MCCHRISTIAN: Well, I feel this way: that decision-making in time of war not only involves the lives of the people on the battlefield, but involves the future liberty of your people at home, and that there's not place -- and that's why the West Point motto has "honor" in it -- there's no place for an officer in any executive department of government, much less the military, who cannot conduct his public duty honorably.

WALLACE: Shortly after Westmoreland suppressed his intelligence chief's report, General Joseph McChristian was transferred out of Vietnam.

It was at this point, we believe, that MACV began to suppress and then to alter critical intelligence reports on the strength of the enemy.

*

*

*

WALLACE: By the summer of 1967, the American Army had grown to a force of almost 500,000 men. We were now everywhere

in Vietnam. And the elaborate intelligence network that General McChristian had created was continuing to discover more and more of the Viet Cong's elusive guerrilla army. Only now, the soldiers in the field started to find that when they identified enemy soldiers, even when they discovered entire new Viet Cong units, MACV's new intelligence chiefs were not including them all in their estimates of enemy strength.

One of the first to be confronted by this strange phenomenon was MACV's newly appointed guerrilla analyst, Richard MacArthur.

RICHARD MACARTHUR: I found that someone was changing the numbers, the numbers that were reported by the sector advisers in the field.

CRILE: Changing the numbers.

MACARTHUR: Uh-huh.

CRILE: You mean the actual totals were not getting translated into official figures.

MACARTHUR: Exactly.

WALLACE: In one province, an angry colonel confronted MacArthur, accusing him of changing the numbers.

MACARTHUR: He had listed 500 guerrillas.

CRILE: Right.

MACARTHUR: Right? So I said, "Fine. All right. Five hundred guerrillas in the province." Then he said to me, "Now I want you to look at the OB summary." I didn't have a copy with me, but he happened to have one there. The OB summary showed 250 guerrillas.

CRILE: The total in the official estimate, the order of battle, OB...

MACARTHUR: Exactly.

CRILE: ...has half of the number...

MACARTHUR: Right. And he was quite disturbed, to say the least. What could I say to him?

WALLACE: While this new problem was developing in Vietnam, back in Washington, the CIA was at last forcing a full-scale confrontation with General Westmoreland over his estimates of the size of the Viet Cong's army.

CRILE: What was at stake in this battle between the CIA and the military over enemy strength?

GEORGE ALLEN: It was a fundamental question of the soundness of our policy, of our whole approach to the war in Vietnam, a question of whether we ultimately, finally were going to come to grips with the nature of the war and the scale of the enemy forces we were up against, or whether we were going to continue this process of self-delusion.

WALLACE: George Allen was the CIA's number two man on Vietnam. Back in 1967, he was the government's leading expert on the enemy.

ALLEN: The scale of effort was conditioned to our understanding of the enemy forces that we were up against. And as long as we underestimated the size of the enemy forces, it seemed to me and to others that we were going not to be taking the kind of effort, the scale of effort required to attain the goal that had been set, which was to prevent the Communists from overrunning South Vietnam, to maintain a non-Communist government in the South.

CRILE: And if you were to have confronted reality, as you saw it, a far larger enemy, as the CIA saw it, an enemy almost twice as large as what we had previously thought?

ALLEN: This would mean that forces on our side, resources on our side would have to be committed on a far larger scale than people were thinking of in order to attain our objective.

WALLACE: And that's what the CIA's battle with the military was to be all about: How many Viet Cong were we fighting? Could we win with the numbers of American troops committed to the war?

The confrontation took place here at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia at something called the National Intelligence Estimate Board. And the man designated to present the CIA's case was George Allen's protege, Sam Adams, the man who had first discovered evidence of a larger enemy army.

WALLACE: Let me understand something. This is a meeting of what is called the National Intelligence Estimate Board.

ADAMS: That's right.

WALLACE: Which, in effect -- it's been called the supreme court of the CIA.

11

ADAMS: Yeah. That's right.

WALLACE: Who takes part in those meetings?

ADAMS: Well, they take place on the CIA's seventh floor. And you have members of the Board of National Estimate, the judges, so to speak. And then you have representatives from all the other agencies, including CIA, and then the Pentagon has people going over, the State Department, and so forth.

WALLACE: All intelligence types.

ADAMS: All intelligence types. It takes place in a room. There's about 40 people in the room.

WALLACE: And ironically, the man sent to represent General Westmoreland's position was none other than Colonel Gaines Hawkins, MACV's leading expert on the Viet Cong, the same Colonel Hawkins who had tried to convince General Westmoreland to accept the evidence of a far larger enemy.

ADAMS: I was quite relieved when I saw him. You know, here's old Gaines Hawkins, who I'd known for quite a while by this time. And I figured, you know, we're on board now. Everything's going to be all right. He agrees that the numbers are way higher.

And then he gives a presentation the first day. And he had changed all the order of battle around. And the bottom line of it, the number that he was coming up with was 294,000, almost exactly what it had been all along.

And, you know, I did double take. I said, "What's going on here?"

WALLACE: I mean you'd had conversations with him...

ADAMS: I'd had conversations with him.

WALLACE: ...in which he had suggested that it may be 100 or 200 thousand more than that.

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. In which he'd -- you know, he'd basically agreed with me. And then here he is, he comes out with this number which is exactly, almost exactly the same it had been before.

CRILE: Did you generally agree with Sam Adams that the official estimates needed to be dramatically increased?

COLONEL HAWKINS: Absolutely. And I told him so.

CRILE: At the meeting?

12

COLONEL HAWKINS: I believe so, that I told him at the meeting.

CRILE: At the National Intelligence Estimates meeting, when you were carrying MACV's position?

COLONEL HAWKINS: Yes. Yes. As I recall, I did tell him that I thought our figures were lower than they actually should be.

CRILE: Well, how could you have done that?

COLONEL HAWKINS: Schizoid, dealing from both sides of the deck, or Sam and I had an analyst-to-analyst relationship.

ADAMS: It was one of the most unusual performances I've ever seen in my whole life anywhere. Colonel Hawkins was on this one side of the table arguing for the lower numbers, and I was on the other side arguing for higher. And the problem was, old Colonel Hawkins, whom I knew so well and whom I admired, looked sick, looked like he didn't believe what he was saying.

COLONEL HAWKINS: Well, there was never any reluctance on my part to tell Sam or anybody else who had a need to know that these figures were crap, they were history, they weren't worth anything.

ADAMS: Some things happened that gradually made me understand what was going on. One of the things he was doing is every time he would argue for lower numbers, he would say, "The command position is" such-and-such. And then -- and this happened on a number of occasions -- he would come around and say to me, "The command position is" such-and-such, "but my personal opinion, Sam, is there are a lot more out there."

CRILE: So Gaines Hawkins, the man, was going to tell the truth to...

COLONEL HAWKINS: The analyst.

CRILE: The analyst, Gaines Hawkins, was going to tell Sam Adams the truth, but...

COLONEL HAWKINS: Sam Adams, the analyst.

CRILE: But Colonel Gaines Hawkins, MACV's representative, was going to battle CIA's Sam Adams.

COLONEL HAWKINS: That is correct.

WALLACE: Did you never say to him, "Colonel, Gaines, look, if I am right and you know that I am right, and Amer-

ican troops are going to have to face a much larger enemy than they're being told, a lot of them are going to get slaughtered"? Did you never say that to him?

ADAMS: I knew he knew it. I knew also that he was in -- must have been in a terrible position. He would never have done that himself. I knew the guy too well. Obviously, he was under orders, somehow.

WALLACE: CBS Reports has learned that Colonel Hawkins was in fact carrying out orders that originated from General Westmoreland. Westmoreland says he doesn't recall these orders. But the head of MACV's delegation told us that General Westmoreland had in fact personally instructed him not to allow the total to go over 300,000.

CRILE: Wasn't there a ceiling put on the estimates by General Westmoreland? Weren't your colleagues instructed, ordered to not let those estimates exceed a certain amount?

COLONEL GEORGE HAMPSHIRE: "We can't live with a figure higher than so-and-so" is the message...

CRILE: Three hundred thousand.

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: ...is the message we got.

WALLACE: Colonel George Hampshire was one of several members of the military delegation troubled by having to carry out General Westmoreland's command position.

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: I was uneasy because of the bargaining characteristics. That's not the way you ought to do it. You don't -- you know, you don't start at an end figure and work back. But we did.

WALLACE: You should know that these men that I've mentioned felt very uncomfortable carrying out your order. They felt that this arbitrary ceiling, you're not to go above 300,000...

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, what if -- if they felt that way about it, why didn't they forthrightly tell me that? They didn't.

WALLACE: That's a pretty good question.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: They didn't.

WALLACE: And they take the responsibility for it. And they say, "We were wrong."

COLONEL HAWKINS: I am a staff officer and I defended

14

the command position. I did it with full knowledge. And if there's any -- if it were immoral or illegal or reprehensible, the fault is here. It doesn't go anywhere else. I defended the command position on the figures.

WALLACE: Colonel Hawkins assumes full responsibility for his actions. But we went to General McChristian, his old intelligence chief, to ask what we should think of General Westmoreland's instructions.

CRILE: To put a ceiling on enemy strength estimates, to tell an intelligence operation that it is not permitted to report enemy strength estimates over a certain number, what does that constitute, sir?

GENERAL MCCHRISTIAN: From my point of view, that is falsification of the facts.

CRILE: Are there statutes in the Uniform Code of Military Justice that would speak to that situation?

GENERAL MCCHRISTIAN: Not that I'm aware of. But there is something on a ring that I wear from West Point, that the motto is, "Duty, Honor, Country." It's dishonorable.

*

*

*

WALLACE: In the summer of 1967, the war in Vietnam was escalating, and so too was the intelligence war between the CIA and the military over the number of Viet Cong we had to contend with. In that invisible war hidden from the American public, General Westmoreland's officers were in trouble. They had been instructed to argue for estimates far lower than they believed to be true. And they were still finding it next to impossible to keep the enemy strength totals under 300,000.

It was at this point that General Westmoreland pursued a new tactic. He proposed that an entire category of the Viet Cong army, the self-defense militia, a force of more than 70,000, simply be dropped from the order of battle. Those Viet Cong had been included in the military's estimates of enemy strength ever since the beginning of the war. Westmoreland had included them in his briefing to the President. But now he was suddenly saying they no longer posed a military threat, and henceforth should be treated as if they didn't exist.

Reporter George Crile asked the CIA's George Allen what part these Viet Cong soldiers played in the war.

CRILE: What was your position on the military potency of the self-defense militia, their part in this war?

ALLEN: Well, they were an integral part of the military potential of the Communist forces in South Vietnam. In fact, the guerrilla militia forces are a fundamental part of Communist forces in any people's war. They were the ones that ambushed our forces when they would enter VC-controlled areas. They were the ones who booby-trapped. They were the ones who helped the populace in general build the punji stakes and other devices that inflicted losses on our forces encroaching in their area. The self-defense militia were responsible for a large proportion of our casualties. They did have military potential. They did engage in activities which did inflict losses on U.S. forces.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: The fact is that these village defenders had a minimum to do with the outcome of the war. The punji sticks. Sure, there were people hurt by punji sticks.

WALLACE: And mines.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: But they had no offensive capability.

ADAMS: When they defect or come in, you count them as a casualty. If they defect to the government or surrender, you count them and you put them in the POW cases. If you knock one off, if you kill them, they join the body count.

And I said, "Look, if you're going to count these people when they're dead, why can't you count them when they're still alive?"

ALLEN: By excluding the paramilitary forces and militia and so forth from the order of battle, we were skewing our concept of the kind of war we were involved. We were skewing our strategy. We were not acknowledging that indeed there was an indigenous South Vietnamese component, that indeed it was a civil war.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: This is a non-issue, Mike.

WALLACE: Here's the issue.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I made the decision. It was my responsibility. I don't regret making it. I stand by it. And the facts prove that I was right. Now, let's stop it.

WALLACE: All right, sir. Question -- and this goes to something that you talked to me earlier. We're moving ahead now. One wonders. You told me earlier that commanders-in-chief don't like to hear bad news, Presidents don't like to hear bad news.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Who does?

16

WALLACE: Nobody does.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Who does?

WALLACE: Right.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I mean you're talking about human nature.

WALLACE: Of course.

Isn't it a possibility that the real reason for suddenly deciding in the summer of 1967 to remove an entire category of the enemy from the order of battle, a category that had been in that order of battle since 1961, was based on political considerations?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: No. Decidedly not. That...

WALLACE: Didn't you make this clear in your August 20th cable?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: No. Yeah. No.

WALLACE: I have a copy of your August 20th cable.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, sure. Okay. Okay.

WALLACE: ...command position on the self-defense controversy. As you put it in the cable, you say the principal reason why the self-defense militia must go, quote, was press reaction.

That cable, dated August 20th, 1967, spelled out General Westmoreland's predicament: "We have been projecting an image of success over the recent months. The self-defense militia must be removed," the cable explained, "or the newsmen will immediately seize on the point that the enemy force has increased." The cable went on to say that no explanation could then prevent the press from drawing an erroneous and gloomy conclusion.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, sure. They would have drawn an erroneous conclusion because it was a non-issue. It was a false issue. It would have totally clouded the situation, which would have been detrimental. But the fact is that since it was wrong, since it was not accurate, since it was not sound, would have brought about that impact. Yes.

WALLACE: And so went the intelligence war.

Back in that summer of 1967, the CIA knew how unpopular its cause was, trying to force a reluctant Washington to accept

the reality of a far larger war. But it had no idea to what lengths the military was prepared to go to keep the estimates of enemy strength under 300,000 men.

CBS Reports has learned that in the midst of the National Intelligence Estimate, General Westmoreland's representatives met here at the Pentagon and commenced arbitrarily to slash MACV's own official estimates of Viet Cong units. It may be that Westmoreland knew nothing about these specific cuts, but they were carried out by his officers, who were attempting to keep the total at the level dictated by their commander.

One of those who reluctantly participated in that cutting was Colonel George Hampshire.

CRILE: You were a...

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: I was a light colonel.

CRILE: You were a light colonel with a lot of responsibility in a time of war, in a small room in the Pentagon, and you were sitting there with five people who were trying to provide the President with accurate intelligence on the enemy.

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: It was a group grope.

CRILE: And it was a group grope to do what? To fake figures?

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: To arrive at a set of figures that MACV could live with.

CRILE: To fake intelligence estimates.

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: That's your characterization, and that's too strong for me. My misgiving was that we were faking it. There was manipulation. Yeah.

CRILE: Is it fair to say that you got together and went unit-by-unit and arbitrarily decided to reduce the numbers of VC enemy in those categories?

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: The operative word being arbitrarily, yes.

WALLACE: Colonel Hampshire of DIA, didn't you, in fairness, we asked, in fairness to your own position, sit back in amazement when you watched this performance of arbitrarily cutting certain numbers out of...

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I didn't do that.

WALLACE: No. I know you didn't.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I didn't do that.

WALLACE: Well, people in your command did.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I didn't do that. Now...

WALLACE: It was during your watch.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well...

WALLACE: And he says, "I was aghast."

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: It was lousy strength estimation. It was shoddy. But we did it.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Now, who actually did the cutting, I don't know. It could have been my chief of staff. I don't know. But I didn't get involved in this personally.

COLONEL HAMPSHIRE: This boiled down to another one of the uncomfortable little jobs that you do for your commander, and these vary in degree.

WALLACE: The battle between MACV and the CIA went on for weeks. Before it was over, it would become the most bitterly fought battle in the history of American intelligence. But in the end, the CIA suddenly, without explanation, reversed its position and gave in to all of General Westmoreland's demands.

George Allen explains why the CIA gave up the fight.

ALLEN: It was strictly a political judgment, a political decision to drop CIA's opposition and to go along with the modified set of figures.

CRILE: But once you make that decision, once you officially say that the enemy is a size you don't believe in, how do you go about making intelligence reports on the enemy subsequently?

ALLEN: That was the source of my frustration.

WALLACE: CIA Director Richard Helms declined to talk to us for this broadcast. But without his authorization, MACV could not have prevailed. It was on Helms's authority that the CIA finally accepted Westmoreland's figure as the official estimate to be sent to the President.

ALLEN: As I say, I didn't talk to Mr. Helms about why he thought we should drop our opposition to the MACV figures. But the feeling was, naturally, there was a political problem,

and he didn't want the agency to be persisting -- to be perceived as persisting in a line which was contravening the policy interests of the Administration.

WALLACE: General Westmoreland had now won the intelligence war. And so instead of being told of an enemy army of more than half a million, the President, the Congress, and the American public were told there were only 248,000 Viet Cong left, that the enemy was running out of men.

CRILE: If the military had accepted the CIA's new position, if the National Intelligence Estimate had come out with a claim that the Viet Cong army was almost twice as large as we'd previously thought, what would the consequence have been? What would the reaction be?

ALLEN: Well, it would have scuttled entire the effort that had been going on that summer to convince the people that the Administration's policy was on the right track. It would have meant that Vietnam would be a very important issue in the election in the coming year, 1968, and would have produced all sorts of congressional inquiry and reaction to the war, and would have fed the popular opposition to the war.

WALLACE: But now the CIA had capitulated; and instead of a reevaluation, the Administration launched a week-long public relations campaign to convince the American public once and for all that we were winning the war.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: ...very, very encouraged. I've never been more encouraged during my entire almost four years in country. I think we're making real progress. Everybody is very optimistic, that I know of, who is intimately associated with our effort there.

MAN: We are winning in Vietnam militarily.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: It's difficult to conceive of a surrender, but it is not difficult to conceive that the enemy may decide that he can't win. And the longer he holds out, the weaker he will get. This is in fact happening. But he does not yet, apparently, realize this.

WALLACE: Ironically, it was at the same time that General Westmoreland was pronouncing an enemy all but defeated that a momentous decision had been taken in Hanoi. The Viet Cong were ordered to prepare the major offensive of the war. It was to be an all-out attack to, quote, split the sky and shake the earth. It was to begin a few months hence during the Vietnamese holiday known as Tet.

*

*

*

WALLACE: These were the North Vietnamese regulars, among the most effective combat troops in the world. They were the enemy soldiers trained in the North, armed by the Russians and Chinese, who infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to fight in the South.

Up until the fall of 1967, the faking and suppression of estimates of enemy strength had focused on the Viet Cong's local troops in the South, but never on these soldiers. Everyone agreed that every effort must be made accurately to report how many of them were moving south to join the battle.

Throughout 1967, General Westmoreland's reports never indicated an infiltration rate higher than 8000 per month. But CBS reports has learned that during the five months preceding the Tet offensive, Westmoreland's infiltration analysts had actually been reporting not seven or eight thousand, but more than 25,000 North Vietnamese coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail each month. And that amounted to a near invasion. But those reports of a dramatically increased infiltration were systematically blocked.

The man in charge of MACV's infiltration analysts, Colonel Russell Cooley, explained what happened to those reports.

COLONEL RUSSELL COOLEY: They never got past the higher headquarters. Every time these figures went up, they came back and we were given another figure to use for infiltration figures.

WALLACE: In our interview, General Westmoreland surprised us by contradicting his official record and confirming what Colonel Cooley had told us about a massive increase in infiltration prior to Tet.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I would say it was in the magnitude of about 20,000 a month that actually -- and this tempo started in the fall and continued.

WALLACE: Twenty thousand a month?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Yes. Of that order of magnitude.

WALLACE: We then reminded General Westmoreland that back in 1967 he had told Congress and the President just the opposite about infiltration, including this statement which he made on Meet the Press in November of that year.

LAWRENCE SPIVAK: What about infiltration? A year ago you said they were infiltrating at the rate of about 7000 a month. What are they doing today?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I would estimate between 5500 and 6000 a month.

21

WALLACE: And so we asked General Westmoreland to explain that contradiction.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: It sounds to me like a misstatement. I don't remember making it. But, certainly, I could not retain all these detailed figures in my mind.

WALLACE: Well, that's not...

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: And if I said that, I was wrong. I was wrong.

WALLACE: But how could General Westmoreland have been wrong about the most critical factor in the war? Could he have been misled by his own intelligence chiefs? That seems unlikely, since he says he knew about the increased infiltration.

And so the question he could not answer for us? Why didn't MACV alert Washington?

So somebody was not sending the proper information.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, I, I -- I have no knowledge that they were sending improper information, inaccurate information. And I -- well, this is a perplexing thing, if true. And I can't believe it is true.

WALLACE: It's all the more puzzling when you consider what was happening at Westmoreland's headquarters on the very day he left for Washington in November 1967 to tell the American public that the enemy was running out of men. On that day, a senior intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Everett Parkins, a West Point graduate who planned to make a career of the Army, had become so incensed by MACV's refusal to send on the reports of an enemy infiltration of 25,000 a month, that he lost his temper and shouted at his superiors.

CRILE: Lieutenant Colonel Parkins was fired for trying to get this report through.

COLONEL COOLEY: He was relieved from his position. The word fired. Yes, he was.

CRILE: And the estimates didn't go through.

COLONEL COOLEY: No.

CRILE: What was the message that you all drew from this incident?

COLONEL COOLEY: Well, the message, sitting back, became very clear. If you're going to go to the extent of being

that forceful, you'll just be removed from the job.

WALLACE: You did not know that these reports were being blocked, that a West Pointer had been fired for insisting for sending this report about...

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: No.

WALLACE: ...considerably greater infiltration to the Joint Chiefs?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I have no recollection of that at all.

COLONEL COOLEY: There was one particular individual who was a keystone behind us and he had a very, very rapid rise to fame in our higher headquarters in estimating enemy strength and...

CRILE: And his name was what?

COLONEL COOLEY: His name was Danny Graham.

CRILE: He was the one who was blocking the infiltration estimates from going through. Is that what you're saying?

COLONEL COOLEY: Yes, I'd have to say that.

WALLACE: The man Colonel Cooley was talking about was General Westmoreland's chief of estimates, Colonel Daniel Graham. We put Colonel Cooley's charges directly to Graham.

You did not block any reports?

GENERAL DANIEL GRAHAM: I never blocked any reports.

WALLACE: Who did?

GENERAL GRAHAM: Nobody that I know blocked any reports. If anybody had blocked information going forward, it would have been me. But I never blocked any information going forward. I'm not that dumb.

WALLACE: But someone was blocking them. You heard General Westmoreland himself tell us the infiltration rate was at least 20,000 a month. The official reports, however, issued by General Graham's shop never showed a rate higher than 7000. And so the question: Why would MACV block such critical reports.

Colonel Cooley offers this explanation.

COLONEL COOLEY: That headquarters itself was under very, very strong pressure, very strong pressures of General Westmore-

land, who had publicly announced that we were entering into what he termed phase four, the light is at the end of the tunnel, where we're about to wrap this up and we're all going to be home for Christmas type of logic.

All of a sudden, now you have an element bringing in higher figures into a system that is so geared up, that says, "We're winning." It was a dichotomy here that couldn't exist.

WALLACE: What seems to have happened by the fall of 1967 is that the vast and diffuse machinery of American intelligence began, simply, to break down.

In November, after exhaustive monitoring of captured enemy documents, the CIA predicted the Tet offensive. It was one of the most notable intelligence breakthroughs of any war. But Joe Hubbie, the man who predicted it, was not told about the increased enemy infiltration. So although he could write a memo predicting what the enemy intended to do, he had no idea that the Viet Cong had the ability, the numbers to pull it off.

CRILE: What was the message in the memo? What were you trying to get across?

JOE HUBBIE: All hell was going to break loose. Okay? Up until now, the war had been going along at a steady pace, very violent, but still at a steady, relatively low-keyed long-term pace. Now, suddenly, what you're talking about is Armageddon. You know, the walls are going to come crashing in. They're coming at us with everything they've got.

WALLACE: Hubbie wrote that report in Saigon. And before sending it on to the White House, the CIA had Sam Adams review it.

ADAMS: I read it and I said, "My Lord, something big is happening." But then, as I read it more closely, I noticed that it didn't mention the fact that there were twice as many guys out there.

WALLACE: Let me understand. Hubbie is forecasting a big offensive.

ADAMS: Yeah, a big offensive.

WALLACE: By the North Vietnamese, the VC.

ADAMS: That's right.

WALLACE: But he is not talking about the fact that there may be, instead of 300,000, 400 or 500 or 600 thousand.

ADAMS: No, he isn't talking about that.

WALLACE: He's not talking about the infiltration numbers or anything of that sort.

ADAMS: He doesn't mention infiltration. He doesn't mention anything.

CRILE: Did it make sense to you, what the VC were about to do?

HUBBIE: Actually, it did not, because I was still -- again, I had no knowledge of these large reinforcements pouring down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. And from what I knew of enemy strength estimates, and compared with the kind of power that the American Army had in country, it just seemed to me insane.

WALLACE: Did your comment, along with that prediction of Tet, did your comment go along to the White House or to Westmoreland or to anybody?

ADAMS: No, it did not. Just the memo which said something big is coming. Not my comment saying that there were twice as many of them to do it.

WALLACE: Didn't anyone feel the need -- well, obviously, no one did feel the need to alert the President of the fact that there was -- the enemy had a considerably greater capability than was imagined.

ADAMS: Apparently not.

WALLACE: Shouldn't someone from MACV have told the President that not only were the VC planning a massive attack, but that they were flooding the South with North Vietnamese regulars?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, sure. That was known. That was known.

WALLACE: The President knew?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I have no idea of whether the President knew or not.

WALLACE: Secretary McNamara said in January, to the Congress, about 6000 people a month are coming down. Richard Helms of the CIA said the same thing. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were never told of an infiltration rate of 20,000 a month. Your command history does not mention 20,000 a month coming down. The White House was not told about 20,000 men a month coming down.

Where's the record of this infiltration having been reported to higher authority?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: I could not tell without reviewing the records and the messages that were sent.

CRILE: So, from September through late January, when the Tet offensive erupts, there are over 100,000 North Vietnamese regulars that have come into the South that have not been reported.

MAN: That's basically correct.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: All the challenges have been met. The enemy is not beaten, but he knows that he has met his master in the field.

For what you and your team have done, General Westmoreland, I award you today an Oak Leaf Cluster.

[Applause]

WALLACE: And so the President of the United States, the American Army in Vietnam, and the American public back home were destined to be caught totally unprepared for the size of the attack that was coming the following month. The President had been alerted to the enemy's intentions, but no one had been able or willing to inform him of the enemy's capabilities.

*

*

*

WALLACE: This was Saigon, command headquarters for the half-million American troops in Vietnam. In January 1968, a totally secure city, the heart of an increasingly secure South Vietnam. If you accepted the government at its word, 68 percent of the country was now pacified, meaning the enemy could not operate in those areas. All the cities of South Vietnam were considered secure. And General Westmoreland had just declared that the enemy was on the run, with only 224,000 men left. It was a moment when American power stood at its zenith. No one was prepared for what was about to happen.

The enemy launched the Tet offensive in the early morning hours of January 30th, 1968. They attacked everywhere at once. And what caught everyone by surprise was that they struck in the middle of all of South Vietnam's cities.

Suddenly, American soldiers were fighting in the streets of Saigon, desperately trying to keep the Viet Cong from over-running the city. Everywhere in South Vietnam, American soldiers were on the defensive. The Viet Cong actually captured the ancient capital of Hue. They were on attack in 40 of the 44 provincial capitals. The enemy was demonstrating a capability that no offi-

cial report had previously acknowledged. But three weeks after the Tet offensive, this is what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs wrote to the President:

"To a large extent, the Viet Cong now control the countryside. The initial attack nearly succeeded in a dozen places. In short, it was a very near thing." He concluded, "MACV does not have adequate reserves against the contingency of another large-scale enemy offensive." That's what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was saying.

But from the beginning of the attack, General Westmoreland insisted that Tet was a major defeat for the enemy. He began making this claim on the second day of the fighting, just after the American Embassy compound had been recaptured from a Viet Cong terror squad and while battles were still raging everywhere in the country.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Now, yesterday the enemy exposed himself, by virtue of this strategy, and he suffered great casualties.

WALLACE: But General Westmoreland's pronouncements of an enemy on the run were now being questioned. And back home, some of our most trusted voices were openly challenged official assurances that this enemy could be defeated.

WALTER CRONKITE: For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer's almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiation or terrible escalation. And for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us. And that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of 100 or 200 or 300 thousand more American troops to the battle.

WALLACE: Walter Cronkite was articulating the sentiment growing in the country that Tet was a devastating setback. But General Westmoreland was insisting that Tet was a great victory. And it was left to his intelligence officers to document that claim by demonstrating massive losses in the enemy's army.

It was at this point, in the weeks after Tet, that things began to careen out of control at MACV intelligence. Guerrilla analyst Richard MacArthur told us what happened after Tet when he tried to defend the integrity of his figures.

MACARTHUR: It was called to my attention by a good friend of mine who sat across the desk from me, and he said, "Mac, did you see what they did to your figures?" Or, "Do you know what they did to your figures?"

And I said, "No. What do you -- what is it you're trying to say?"

And he didn't say anything else. And so I just reached down and looked at my figures and saw that they had been cut drastically. They had been cut in half.

CRILE: Your guerrillas have now been reduced by half without your okay.

MACARTHUR: Absolutely. It was done, apparently, while I was on vacation, while I was on R&R.

CRILE: So, by this time, you just say this is business as usual?

MACARTHUR: No. As a matter of fact, I exploded. I stormed down to the other end of the hall and walked in and said, "Colonel Wyler," I said, "Hi," you know. And I said, "What -- who changed my figures?"

And the Colonel said to me, "Mac, lie a little, Mac. Lie a little."

Well, I said, "I'm not going to lie a little." And I did an about-face, turned around and marched out of his office.

It was a very strange time for me. Because, you see, I really didn't know who to complain to. I didn't know whose attention to bring this to, because I didn't know -- don't forget, this was a pretty high -- this combined intelligence center was really the intelligence arm of MACV. And I didn't know, honestly, who to speak to. I mean it wasn't as though you could go and see the chaplain or somebody, you know. I mean I didn't know how -- who was really involved in this thing. I'll tell you, honestly, I didn't know if someday I might wind up in the Saigon River because I said, "Hey, look," you know, "something's gone wrong. People are changing these numbers. What's happening here?"

CRILE: The atmosphere was that intense?

MACARTHUR: It was that intense. Yes.

WALLACE: Shortly after, MacArthur was transferred.

MACV intelligence, meanwhile, went ahead and produced its first official estimate of enemy strength after Tet. This is that document, sent on to the Pentagon and the White House, listing an enemy reduced to 204,126 men.

And this is Commander James Meacham, the officer in charge of putting out that report. So troubled was Meacham that

he wrote home every night confessing to what he was being asked to do.

He's writing in March of 1968, telling his wife about how MACV was going about faking the first order of battle report after Tet. I quote from his letter: "We started with the answer and plugged in all sorts of figures until we found the combination which the machine could digest. And then we wrote all sorts of estimates showing why the figures were right which we had to use, and we continue to win the war."

Did you believe, sir, that the OB reports coming out after Tet were honest?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: What an individual writes to his wife may or may not be an objective account. Now, it was the prerogative of General Davidson, who was my intelligence chief, to introduce some logic and some common sense into estimates.

WALLACE: But as we shall see, after Tet there was nothing logical about MACV's statistics on the enemy.

How many troops did he lose, General?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, in the first week, out of a commitment, according to our intelligence, of about 84,000 that were committed in the early days of the Tet offensive, he lost 55,000.

WALLACE: Killed?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Killed.

WALLACE: And how many wounded?

GENERAL WESTMORELAND: Well, we have no way of knowing that. But usually the ratio is about three-to-one, about three wounded for one that is killed.

WALLACE: If you take General Westmoreland at his word, here is the logical problem you run into. It begins with MACV's official estimate of total combined enemy strength in the South just before Tet, 224,000. Five weeks later, on March 7th, Westmoreland reported 50,000 of those enemy had been killed. Now, according to his own standard ratio, for every one killed, three were wounded. So even disregarding the enemy soldiers who defected or were captured, the bottom-line figure just didn't make sense. If so many Viet Cong had been taken out of action, the question had to be asked: Whom were we fighting?

MACV's intelligence officers discovered the problem

when they started to feed the enemy loss figures into their computers.

Colonel Cooley explains.

COLONEL COOLEY: When we put those figures in, the enemy loss figures were so high, we had almost no enemy left in country. And people -- the analysts in our headquarters would look at that and say, "This is" -- you know, "This is unbelievable. This is a little too unbelievable."

WALLACE: According to Colonel Cooley, there was a general agreement at this time that something had to be done. Cooley and another senior intelligence officer, Commander James Meacham, have told CBS Reports that several weeks after Tet, Colonel Daniel Graham, General Westmoreland's chief of estimates, asked them to alter MACV's historical record. In effect, they then accused Graham of personally engineering a cover-up.

First, Commander Meacham.

CRILE: There comes a time when Colonel Graham asked you and Colonel Wyler to tamper with the computer's memory, to change the data base in some way.

COMMANDER JAMES MEACHAM: That's it. That's it.

CRILE: You said no.

COMMANDER MEACHAM: Well, we didn't say no. I mean this thing was not private property. It belonged to the intelligence directorate. We were the custodians of it. We didn't like what Danny Graham proposed to do. We didn't want him to do it. At the end of the day, we lost the fight and he did it.

CRILE: What was so long about going back into the memory? What got Meacham so distressed about it?

COLONEL COOLEY: I would -- a little bit of the 1984 syndrome here. You know, where you can obliterate something or you, you know, can alter it to the point where it never existed type of logic.

COMMANDER MEACHAM: Up to that time, even though some of the current estimates and the current figures had been juggled around with, we had not really tinkered with our data base, if I can use that jargonistic word. And Danny Graham was asking us to do it. And we didn't like it.

GENERAL GRAHAM: Oh, for crying out loud. I never asked anybody to wipe out the computer's memory. I don't know what -- honestly, I haven't got any idea what he's talking about.

March that General Westmoreland had requested 206,000 additional troops, the country was stunned. It seemed to be an admission that the half-million American soldiers already in Vietnam couldn't cope with the enemy.

Still, Lyndon Johnson held firm, as he tried desperately to rally support for his war effort.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: But I point out to you the time has come when we ought to unite, when we ought to stand up and be counted, when we ought to support our leaders, our government, our men, and our allies until aggression is stopped.

WALLACE: The President had been determined to see the war through. But by the end of the month, he could no longer ignore the mounting criticism. And on March the 25th, he summoned a council of trusted advisers, the so-called wise men. Their task: to assess the war effort and advise the President.

The wise men had met once before, five months earlier. They had listened to briefings from the CIA and the military, and they had advised the President to disregard public criticism and carry on with the war. But now these same wise men were about to be given a different set of facts.

ADAMS: On the 20th of March...

WALLACE: '68.

ADAMS: ...1968, I was asked -- and obeyed the order -- I was asked to bring together an estimate of how many enemy there were. And I said there were about 600,000. And I understand it was used to brief the so-called wise men, Lyndon Johnson's senior advisers.

WALLACE: Who are we talking about?

ADAMS: They included Dean Acheson, George Ball, Arthur Goldberg, Maxwell Taylor, and so forth.

WALLACE: What had happened is that after Tet, the CIA had regained the courage of its conviction. And, among other things, they told the wise men of the CIA's belief that we were fighting a dramatically larger enemy. That was at least one of the reasons why Lyndon Johnson's advisers concluded that despite the military's insistence that we were winning, the enemy could not, in fact, be defeated at any acceptable cost. The wise men then stunned the President by urging him to begin pulling out of the war.

Five days later, a sobered Lyndon Johnson addressed the nation.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON: I shall not seek and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your President.

WALLACE: Two months after the President's speech, General William Westmoreland was transferred back to Washington and promoted to become Chief of the Army.

To this day, General Westmoreland insists that the enemy was virtually destroyed at Tet.

Be that as it may, the fighting in Vietnam went on for seven more years after the Tet offensive. Twenty-seven thousand more American soldiers were killed. Over 100,000 more were wounded. And on April 30th, 1975, that same enemy entered Saigon once again. Only this time it was called Ho Chi Minh City.

*

*

*

WALLACE: Sam Adams, the man who first alerted the government to the existence of a larger enemy, became increasingly disillusioned with the CIA after the Tet offensive. He finally resigned and began a 10-year effort to get his story told.

George Allen completed a long and distinguished career with the CIA. Today he is retired and still concerned about the integrity of our intelligence, for he worries that history might repeat itself.

Richard MacArthur, MACV's guerrilla analyst, had hoped to make a career in the Army. His stand after Tet dashed those hopes. Today MacArthur is an investigator for the State of New York.

Colonel Gaines Hawkins stayed on in Army intelligence for three years after Tet, a loyal staff officer to the end. Today he is running a home for the elderly in West Point, Mississippi.

General Joseph McChristian, the man whose report General William Westmoreland would not accept, went on to become the Army's Chief of Intelligence. Today he is retired.

Colonel Russell Cooley stayed on in military intelligence for several years, specializing in protecting the integrity of the Pentagon's top secret computers. Today he is in charge of computer security for the Fairchild Data Center in Mountain View, California.

Commander James Meacham has retired. Today he is chief military correspondent for the respect British journal The Economist.

Colonel Daniel Graham left Vietnam a few months after Tet, at the same time as General Westmoreland. He soon became General Graham, the head of all military intelligence. Today Graham continues to be an influential voice in intelligence circles in Washington.

General William Westmoreland is retired. He is a popular speaker in this country and abroad. He holds to his view that we won the war on the battlefield in Vietnam, and only chose to lose it at home.